CONFLICTS RESOLUTIONS TEAMBUILDING

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ON TUTORIAL | *In this tutorial we cover the following topics:*

☞ *conflicts in life and at workplace*
☞ *resolution strategies & techniques*
☞ *Abraham Maslow motivation theory*
☞ *Teambuilding essentials*

Conflicts on teams arise every once in a while and are inevitable, stressful, and can be quite prolonged, even silent. Doing your job passionately and loving it, only worsens the conflicts arising from e.g. power issues, personality differences, positioning one self, mistrust, etc. Nevertheless, if a leader knows her/his team well, (s) he might use the conflict to the actual benefit for the team by strategically knowing how and when is appropriate to intervene.

Conflicts often are about non-recognized need of another person so here it is worth going back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to better understand root causes of conflicts but also to approach team building in an efficient way.

ON CONFLICTS
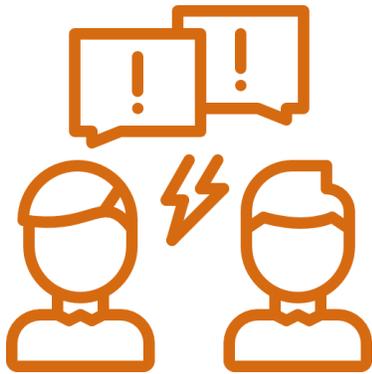
Numerous definitions are there assigned to a conflict (usual syn. arguing, disputing, etc.). According to Cambridge Online Dictionary, and for the purposes of better understanding conflicts arising at work place, a conflict is defined *as an active disagreement between people with* **opposing opinions** *or* **principles***; or an active disagreement, as between opposing* **needs**. No matter which definition we use, essentially conflicts are about (*unmet) needs* (as needs derive in fact from our ideas, principals, and opinions we have about an issue) a person or persons (in teams) have.

Question for discussion:
What do we commonly fight about?

Conflicts in their nature can be internal and external. Regardless of the type, conflicts are actually all about dealing with: EGO, PRIDE, and SELF-CONCEPT on one hand, and also about PEOPLE'S JOBS, CHILDREN, LIVES, SENSE OF MISSION and PURPOSE.

Even though most of the time when a conflict is mentioned we think of the one happing between 2 persons, types of conflicts in modern day living are in fact numerous and so we often hear today about inner conflicts a person has with her/him self (usualy on morale issues) and these are the so called *internal conflicts*. Conflicts between 2 persons and/or teams, and/or countries are *external conflicts*. Another common types of external conflicts are: person against the modern society postulates (e.g. if a person struggles to keep a job that a new machine can do better, the physical struggle is against the machine, but the emotional struggle is against the society that breeds technology), and person against the nature (e.g. conflicts evolving from personal use of resources on the planet that are disturbing its nature – cutting woods for keeping one's home warm in winter times, etc.).

Conflicts happen every day: in our private life or at work. In private life researches on the topic state that people most commonly argue over children and finances. At the same time most conflicts at work are task related (when a person or a group has different understanding, that is viewpoints, opinions or ideas on delivery of a task), relationship related (emotional conflicts emerging in teams from persons experiences differences in working together, usually leading to task conflicts as the team focuses on members relations rather than concrete task issues) or value

related conflicts (when incompatible belief system on what is bad/good, just/unjust by one group is forced onto another).

Question for discussion
Why do we get into conflicts (at work)?

Use this question to start debate in a more general way, focusing firstly on conflicts that your group experienced lately in their everyday life (e.g. conflicts with children, parents, etc.). Then, open the floor to participants understanding of root causes of conflicts at work – offer them the opportunity to comment whether they participated in one such conflict and what has been the resolution path. Then briefly present what mostly causes conflicts at work.

Root causes of conflicts are different, but looking at typical work related conflicts evolve around: position of power, poor communication, management style – weak leadership or change of leadership. Root causes may also be hidden and so the early warning signs of conflict should be given particular attention. These are mostly related to body language stating some sudden change in behavior, e.g. surprise or avoiding sharing some bad news, and disagreements, e.g. showing less respect, not having clear goals, having fundamentally different values, etc.

Stress, mistrust, anxiety and low productivity deriving from a conflict situation may all be sidestepped if a team knows when and how to effectively deal with it.

ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

Conflict resolution (management) strategies and techniques are numerous, and often using combined elements of different approaches may bring about the best results. Nevertheless, there are certain common grounds that should be kept in mind when planning to effectively deal with a conflict. These common grounds can be grouped around knowing ourselves and others and effectively communicating our needs/opinions and understanding these of the others. Thus the most useful tips around which effective resolution strategies can be built include:

#1	Know precisely what your need is (ask yourself often what is the need you may have within the team and how to fulfil it: think of the others with the same need, why does it matter for you, and why is it relevant for the team, how to present it/express it in a best way, whom to talk to, when is the best moment to address it, etc.)

#2	Face the conflict! In order to resolve the issues you may have, you first need to face it! Be aware of the consequences anticipated, but do not put it under the rug!
#3	Communicate! Community! Communicate! As often as possible! With yourself and the others!
#4	Be realistic! Be honest! Being honest about your own needs is crucial for addressing them. This will also present you in good light vis-à-vis the others – knowing what you need is half way there! You may also strike others as a confident, serious, dedicated person. A motivator for other to express themselves and move things forward!
#5	Always keep in mind that conflicts are normal, even desired and can in fact be beneficial for future collaboration and joint achievements. To put it simply, agree to disagree!
#6	If the conflict is caused by different value systems, the best way to make a progress is to openly state your mind and explain why you see things in certain way. Root causes of value conflicts can be tricky to overcome, but understanding where ideas of others come from will definitely make a progress.
#7	Try always to focus on an issue of dispute/disagreement and the whys part, not on a person presenting it! This is the precondition for making your case logical, avoiding or limited emotions.
#8	Show consistency, yet be open to finding the middle ground, and try to create a win-win case!

ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

According to project management practice and theory around it developed by the Project Management Institute in Philadelphia (see www.pmi.com for details), there are in so far 5 commonly identified project management techniques related to dealing with conflicts at work depending on the most common conflict situation analyses. Each choice of technique has its benefits and downsides. These are categorized as per the table below.

| #1 Withdraw/ Avoid	#2 Smooth/ Accommodate	#3 Compromise/ Reconcile	#4 Force/ Direct	#5 Collaborate/ Problem solve
Stakes are low	You are very busy and have no time	All parties involved need to win	You take side: win- lose situation	Want to incorporate multiple views
Stakeholders involved are not important	Need of a temporary solution	You have an equal relationship with them	stakes are high, need of immediate solution	People involved in the conflict are very influential
Issue is not worth investing your time		Collaborative and forcing techniques do not work	you know one party is right	Consensus is required
Issue will disappear on its own; Limited/no information available		You need a temporary solution to move forward quickly	stakeholders involved are not very important	Want to distribute the responsibility equally to all parties
+ Saves time - Weakens position of a manager	+ Harmony, good will, time for permanent solution - Weakens position of a manager	+ Fast result, lowers stress, keeps all parties cool - No trust in the long run Conflict could resurface	+ Quick solution - Negative effect on a team member	+ Consensus, commitment - Time consuming

ON NEEDS AND MOTIVATION

In order to understand better the root causes of conflicts, it is worthwhile looking at Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and the related motivation factors at work place. Before explaining on Maslow's, you may choose to use the following web materials available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-4ithG_07Q and www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDN4FBpcxaY Now, sum up the learning points using the box below.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) was a key figure in world psychology (American psychologist) field defining and creating a 5 stage hierarchy of needs theory (1954, also known as the motivation theory) that is to a large extent learnt and still acted today with some modifications (8 stages alternative introduced in the 1970s). Maslow is known for a book Motivation and Personality – that was based on study of workplace motivation.

In its essence, the hierarchy of needs theory states that human needs can be seen through 5 stages needs prioritization in which needs related to prior stage must be fulfilled in order for a person to move on to the next stage, i.e. experience/have new needs. The culmination, 5th stage in hierarchy of needs is the self-actualization.

In an enlarged theory, 5th stage is Cognitive needs - knowledge and understanding, curiosity, exploration, need for meaning and predictability. Then comes Aesthetic needs - appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc, followed by Self-actualization needs - realizing personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences whole the final culmination is represented by the Transcendence needs - A person is motivated by values which transcend beyond the personal self (e.g., mystical experiences and certain experiences with nature, aesthetic experiences, sexual experiences, service to others, the pursuit of science, religious faith, etc.).

Need for
Self-actualization

Respect/esteem

Belonging
Security
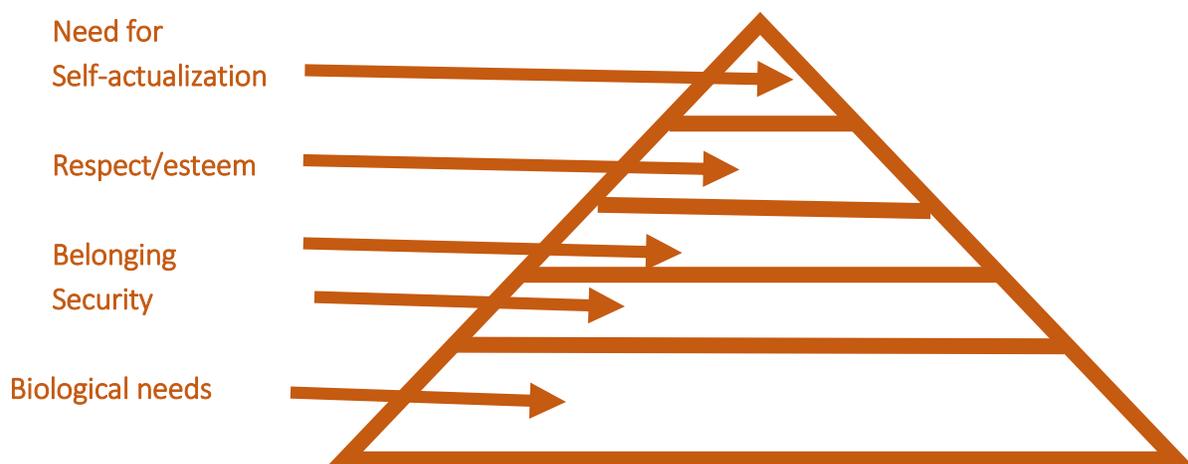
Biological needs

1.	**Biological needs**	Water Food Clothing Living space Family and reproduction
2.	**Need for security**	Personal security Good heath Employment security Retirement Legal security
3.	**Need for belonging**	Friendship Love Social circles
4.	**Need for respect**	Respect from others Social/business status
5.	**Need for self-actualization**	Tendencies for fully achieving own potential and expression on professional level

Question for discussion:

Do all people have all these needs? Do some people do not feel any of these needs, e.g. for self-actualization?

It is believed that all people have all the stated needs. Some are permanent, every day and strong, while some we feel more rarely and in weaker intensity.

The basic permanent and intense needs are **biological needs**. These are water and food, to be dressed, have a place to live, a need for family and reproduction. With a salary that can cover basic expenses such as food and water, wardrobe and rent for the apartment, there will also be greater satisfaction of the candidate with the job.

The **need for security** is a very strong and intense need, and the next one that people are trying to satisfy. This includes the sense of personal security and legal security, job security, good health and social protection, age security, and so on. Satisfying this need at work can be achieved through

a higher degree of work safety, paid health treatment, paying part of the salary to a private pension fund, and so on.

The **need for belonging** is also a very strong and intense need. For a company that wants to attract the best candidates, it is very important that there is a general image of it being the company whose most important resource is the employees and that it therefore takes care of the people. The atmosphere in which the best image is created to achieve this is through the team building activities, different forms of socialization and of out-of-work activities (pubs, sports, excursions, etc.).

The **need for respect and appreciation** is a strong but less intense need. Satisfying this need is achieved through rewards, promotion, suggestions for memberships in professional bodies and in similar ways, and companies that look after their employees will find ways to give their employees a job recognition.

At the top of the hierarchy, there is a **need for self-actualization**. It is a need for personal growth and development, personal and professional fulfillment. It is the least intense and in some individuals it can be very strong, while others can feel it only sometimes. The firm can contribute to meeting this need by entrusting specialist work, proposing high functions, and other ways of enabling the individual to be professionally identified.

"What a man can be, he must be. This need we call self-actualization."

Abraham Maslow

In conclusion, people constantly have to satisfy their needs. Failure to meet needs, especially those basic and intense ones, or inadequate treatment may affect the physical and mental health of a person. Hence, a good job that can attract high-quality candidates and respond to their needs will be the job that will enable their employees to meet as many of their needs as possible. Thus, their personal satisfaction and work motivation and productivity will be at a high level, and the atmosphere with the company will be positive and stimulating.
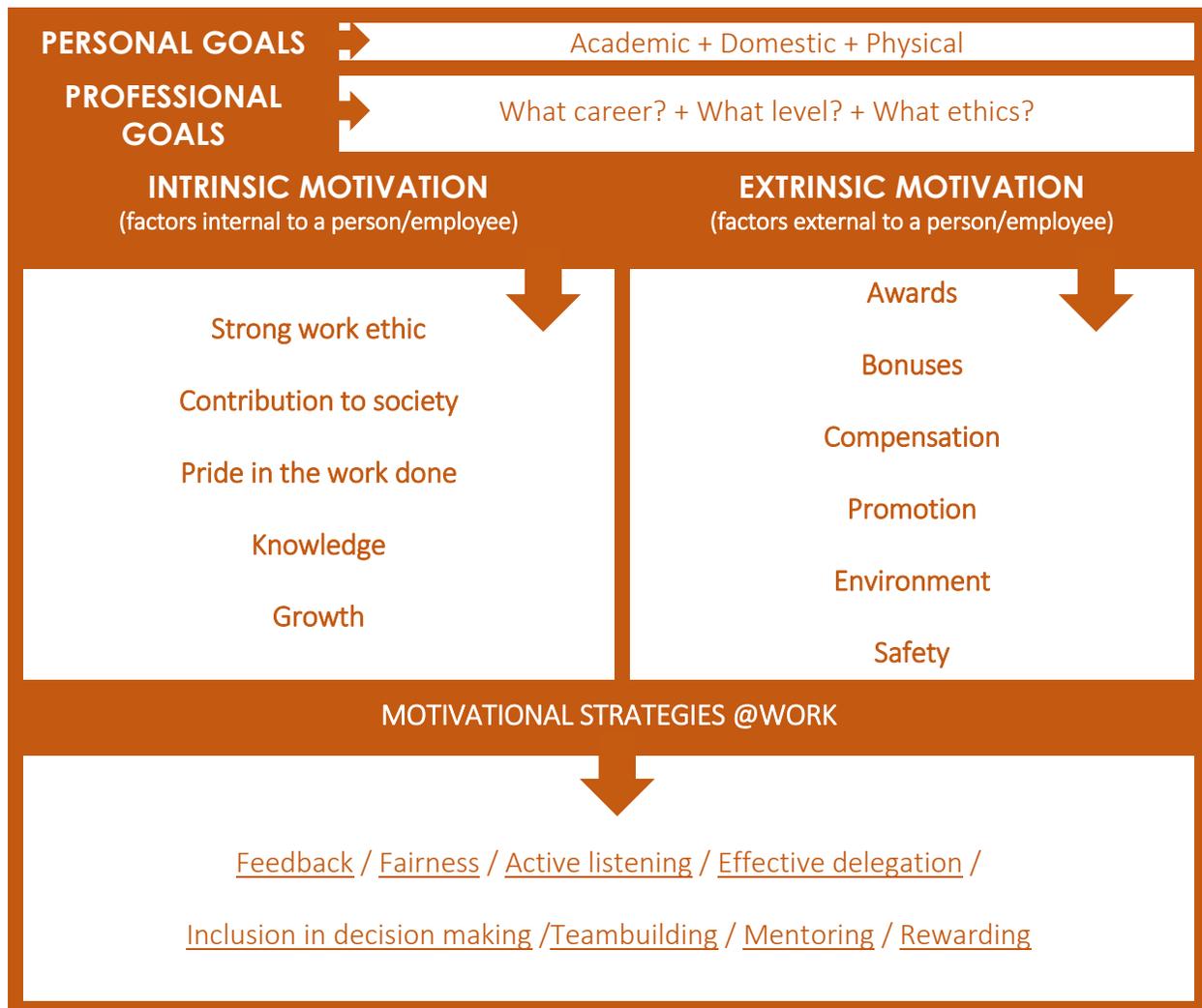
Task:
Define your own needs at your (dream) job, explain what your professional motivation is.

> **Motivation** – the act of inspiring others to move towards goal-directed action.
> *(Cambridge Online Dictionary)*

Twyla Dell in *How to Motivate People* matched work-linked qualities to Maslow's work to help link the theory to more familiar work related concepts and needs with motivation (factors). In a nutshell, she connects Maslow's survival needs with (motivation coming from) efficient managers and employees who think for themselves; security needs with (motivation to) see end result of work and make work interesting; belonging needs are connected to be listened to and informed on; needs for respect are those of prestige and these represent (motivation to get) respect and recognition for the work done; self-actualization needs are the ones of self-fulfillment and these correspond to (motivation coming from) overcoming challenges and developing new skills.

Motivation factors at work and in life can be either intrinsic (inner, internal) or extrinsic (outside, external). Motivation is one of the focal points that move us in life towards certain goals be it personal or professional. Typical goals and motivation factors are given in the table below. It has been shown that the best way to motivate someone to work is to know what moves him/her. These are normally a combination of intrinsic and external factors that help us in fulfilling private and professional goals. Indication of common intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors is given in table below.

Even though different factors motivate different people, some common elements are useful to mention as grounds of successful motivational strategies at workplace. These elements are: provision of frequent feedback on the work done; fairness in terms of workload, expectations, assistance, professionalism, ethics, etc.; active listening to others and their needs; effective delegation of tasks; creating ownership of the process/product being created is important motivational factor that could be developed through inclusion of team members in decision making, mentoring, rewarding, and teambuilding opportunities.

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MLADOST

PERSONAL GOALS	Academic + Domestic + Physical
PROFESSIONAL GOALS	What career? + What level? + What ethics?

INTRINSIC MOTIVATION (factors internal to a person/employee)	EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION (factors external to a person/employee)
Strong work ethic	Awards
Contribution to society	Bonuses
Pride in the work done	Compensation
Knowledge	Promotion
Growth	Environment
	Safety

MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES @WORK

Feedback / Fairness / Active listening / Effective delegation /

Inclusion in decision making /Teambuilding / Mentoring / Rewarding

TEAMBUILDING ESSENTIALS

Vast literature is there to support empiric studies on some of the teambuilding essentials. There are **4 principles** that define successful team building in the workplace:

→ **Define success criteria**

→ **Lead by example**

→ **Value all contributions**

→ **Reward (group) success**

Knowing what are the needs and motives of team members may indicate on the best type of activities that could boost team's efficacy and efficiency (productivity level) – teambuilding. Today most teambuilding activities are done with engagement of private consultants that work during a couple of days in out of office (normally also including out-door) setting to boost teams and leaders' capacities – communication, trust and cooperation to achieve greater success.

Most often companies organize teambuilding activities twice per year, while in smaller teams this is done quarterly. Teambuilding activities represent for many a stepping out of the comfort zone and actually meeting the people one works with every day.

Even though teambuilding activities are usually coordinated with the team manager/leader, sometimes they can be new to them as well. Tips and tricks on how to handle different teambuilding situations for both managers and team members could be useful in order to prepare and benefit as a group from each activity done.

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